

CONNECTING STRUCTURE FOR SECTIONAL RACK

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention relates to a connecting structure for sectional rack, and more particularly to a connecting structure that enables a sectional rack to be assembled without using any tool and to use vertical posts of different cross sections and
10 therefore largely reduces restrictions in assembling the sectional rack.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

15 A sectional rack has the advantages of easy to assemble and disassemble, easy to transport, and easy to store, and therefore has been widely used at home, in offices, and in many open-shelf shops.

20 The sectional racks developed in early stage were assembled using screws, so that a number of shelves are supported on erected vertical posts and horizontal frames for use. Since tools are required to assemble and disassemble the above-structured sectional racks,
25 it is inconvenient for consumers to use them. There are also developed sectional racks that can be

assembled without using any tool. One of the conventional sectional racks is referred to as the bamboo-type sectional rack. US Patent Nos. 5,676,263; 5,303,645; 5,174,676; 4,991,725; 4,799,818; 4,595,107; 5 4,546,887; and 4,763,799 all disclose such bamboo-type sectional racks.

The bamboo-type sectional rack includes vertical posts having a plurality of vertically spaced annular
10 grooves provided thereon, externally tapered connecting members adapted to engage with the annular grooves on the vertical posts, and shelves having internally tapered short sleeves provided at four corners for tightly mounting around the externally
15 tapered connecting members. The bamboo-type sectional rack has the following two problems in use:

1. The short sleeves of the shelf must be mounted around the connecting members from a top of the vertical
20 posts to increase the difficulty in assembling the sectional rack. When it is desired to replace one or more of the shelves, or to change the shelves to different heights on the vertical posts, all other shelves above the shelves to be replaced or changed
25 must be removed from the vertical posts before the target shelves can be replaced or changed. And, it

is doubtlessly very inconvenient for users to do so.

2. When it is desired to have the shelves mounted at two opposite sides of one vertical post, it is impossible for two laterally adjacent shelves to locate at the same height on the vertical post, making the fully assembled sectional rack looked strange and ugly.

10 It is therefore tried by the inventor to develop a connecting structure for sectional rack to overcome the problems existed in the conventional bamboo-type sectional rack, so that shelves for the sectional rack may be connected to vertical posts having different cross sections, and any two laterally adjacent shelves may be located at the same height on the vertical post as desired.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

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A primary object of the present invention is to provide a connecting structure for sectional rack. The connecting structure includes a plurality of vertical posts, horizontal shelves, and connecting members. Each of the vertical posts is provided with at least one row of engaging holes, with which upper and lower

hooks at an end of each connecting member are engaged.
A pad is attached to each connecting member, so that
a first side of the pad fitly bears against the vertical
post. A second side of the pad opposite to the first
5 side is a downward and outward inclined surface. Each
of the horizontal shelves has an outer cover provided
at each corner thereof for putting on the connecting
member, so that an internal inclined surface of the
outer cover is in contact with and pushes the inclined
10 surface of the pad against the vertical post to enable
a firm connection of the shelf, the connecting member,
and the vertical post to one another.

In the present invention, the outer cover has an
15 internal structure adapted to tightly clamp the pad
and accordingly the connecting member, so that the
outer cover, the pad, and the connecting member tightly
bear against one another.

20 In the present invention, the pad is horizontally
movable on the connecting member within a small range
to enable easy engagement of the connecting member with
the engaging holes on the vertical post, and push of
the pad against the vertical post by the outer cover.

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In the present invention, the horizontal shelves may

be connected to two opposite sides of the vertical posts at the same height.

In the present invention, the vertical post is not
5 limited to any specific cross section, but may be a round, a square, a triangular, or an oblong pipe, or a pipe having any other suitable cross section.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

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The structure and the technical means adopted by the present invention to achieve the above and other objects can be best understood by referring to the following detailed description of the preferred
15 embodiments and the accompanying drawings, wherein

Fig. 1 is an assembled perspective view of a sectional rack using the connecting structure of the present invention;

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Fig. 2 is a fragmentary exploded perspective view of the connecting structure for sectional rack according to a first embodiment of the present invention;

25 Fig. 3 is a partially assembled perspective view of the connecting structure for sectional rack according

to the first embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 4 is a bottom view of an outer cover included in the first embodiment of the connecting structure of
5 the present invention;

Fig. 5 is an assembled sectioned side view of the connecting structure for sectional rack according to the first embodiment of the present invention;
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Fig. 6 is another assembled sectioned side view of the connecting structure for sectional rack according to the first embodiment of the present invention;

15 Fig. 7 is a front elevation of a sectional rack using the connecting structure of the present invention to enable two laterally adjacent shelves to locate at the same height;

20 Fig. 8 is a perspective view of a connecting member included in a connecting structure for sectional rack according to a second embodiment of the present invention;

25 Fig. 9 is a bottom perspective view of an outer cover included in a connecting structure for sectional rack

according to a second embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 10 is a partially assembled perspective view of the connecting structure for sectional rack according to the second embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 11 is a fully assembled perspective view of the connecting structure for sectional rack according to the second embodiment of the present invention, wherein a part of a shelf of the sectional rack is cut away to better show the assembled connecting structure; and

Fig. 12 is a sectioned side view of Fig. 11.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Please refer to Figs. 1, 2, and 3. A connecting structure for sectional rack according to a first embodiment of the present invention mainly includes a plurality of vertical posts 10, a plurality of horizontal shelves 20, a plurality of connecting members 30, a plurality of pads 40 adapted to attach to the connecting members 30, and a plurality of outer covers 50 separately provided at four corners of the

horizontal shelves 20 for engaging with the connecting members 30 and the pads 40.

Each of the vertical posts 10 is provided with one or
5 more rows of engaging holes 11, with which the connecting members 30 are engaged to attach to the vertical post 10.

Each of the connecting members 30 is a flat member
10 provided at a first end with upper and lower hooks 31 adapted to extend into two vertically adjacent engaging holes 11 on the vertical post 10 and thereby hold the connecting member 30 to the vertical post 10. A second end of the connecting member 30 opposite to
15 the first end is a hooking section projected from the vertical post 10 for engaging with the outer cover 50 provided at the corner of the horizontal shelf 20. The hooking section of the connecting member 30 may include, for example, a retaining slot 32 being formed near the
20 second end of the connecting member 30 to extend downward from a top of the connecting member 30. And, a notch 33 is provided on the top of the connecting member 30 at a predetermined point between the first and the second end.

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Please refer to Figs. 2 and 8 at the same time. Each

of the pads 40 has a first side adapted to fitly bear against an outer surface of the vertical post 10. A second side of the pad 40 opposite to the first side is a downward and outward inclined surface 41. The pad
5 40 is provided at predetermined positions with upper and lower openings 42, 43, through which the upper and lower hooks 31 of the connecting member 30 may be passed to extend into the engaging holes 11 on the vertical post 10. The openings 42, 43 also allow the pad 40 to
10 attach to the connecting member 30.

Please refer to Figs. 2 to 6 at the same time. Each of the outer covers 50 has an open outer side facing toward the vertical post 10 and an open bottom. The
15 outer cover 50 is internally provided at a top with a vertically downward extended insertion plate 51 adapted to extend into and engage with the retaining slot 32 of the connecting member 30. As can be best seen from Figs. 4 and 6, the outer cover 50 is also
20 provided at two lateral sides of the insertion plate 51 with two internal walls, which are downward and inward inclined surfaces 52 adapted to fitly bear against the inclined surface 41 of the pad 40 when the latter is associated with the connecting member 30 and
25 positioned in the outer cover 50. When the outer covers 50 provided at four (or three) corners of the

shelf 20 are assembled to corresponding connecting members 30 and pads 40 that have been connected to the vertical posts 10, the horizontal shelf 20 is firmly connected to vertical posts 10 to form an assembled
5 sectional rack, as shown in Fig. 1.

When the outer cover 50 is engaged from the open bottom thereof with a top of the associated connecting member 30 and pad 40 already connected to the engaging holes
10 11 on the vertical post 10 and gradually moved downward, the internal inclined surfaces 52 together apply a gradually increased pushing force against the inclined surface 41 of the pad 40 and thereby firmly push the first side of the pad 40 against the outer surface of
15 the vertical post 10. Meanwhile, the outer cover 50 is gradually pushed by the inclined surface 41 of the pad 40 away from the vertical post 10, and the insertion plate 51 engaged with the retaining slot 32 of the connecting member 30 pulls the connecting member 30
20 outward relative to the vertical post 10 to tightly press the upper and lower hooks 31 against inner sides of the engaging holes 11. Therefore, the outer cover 50, the connecting member 30, the pad 40, and the vertical post 10 are tightly connected to one another.

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The outer cover 50 is provided at the top with a long

cut 53, an inner end of which has a downward extended
lug 54. When the outer cover 50 is engaged with the
connecting member 30, the lug 54 is extended into the
notch 33 on the top of the connecting member 30 while
5 the top of the connecting member 30 is extended into
the long cut 53. The engaged lug 54 and notch 33
provides the outer cover 50 and the connecting member
30 with an additional contact point to share loads on
the connecting member 30, and the engagement of the
10 long cut 53 with the top of the connecting member 30
prevents the outer cover 50 from moving relative to
the connecting member 30.

The horizontal shelf 20 is fixedly connected to the
15 vertical posts 10 via the engagement of the outer
covers 50 with the connecting members 30 and the pads
40. Since the associated connecting member 30 and pad
40 are located at only one side of the vertical post
10, the vertical post 10 may be symmetrically provided
20 at an opposite side with another row of engaging holes
41 for two shelves 20 to connect to two opposite sides
of the vertical post 10 at the same height, as shown
in Fig. 7, giving the assembled sectional rack a
harmonious and esthetic appearance that is more easily
25 accepted by consumers.

The pad 40 is made of a plastic material to possess a certain degree of compressibility, which allows the pad 40 to slightly deform under compression and thereby create a pushing and locating effect. The first side
5 of the pad 40 has a configuration mating with the outer surface of the vertical post 10, allowing the pad 40 to closely bear against the vertical post 10 when the pad 40 is subject to a compressive force. A metal piece 44 is embedded in the pad 40 at a predetermined position
10 with a nose 45 forward projected from the first side of the pad 40, as shown in Fig. 8. When the pad 40 is pushed toward the outer surface of the vertical post 10 by the outer cover 50, the nose 45 is extended into a lower one of the two engaging holes 11 engaged with
15 the upper and lower hooks 31 and is located near an upper end of the lower engaging hole 11. With these arrangements, lifting of the outer covers 50 to remove the horizontal shelf 20 from the sectional rack would not bring the pads 40 to move upward along with the
20 outer covers 50, permitting the connecting members 30 and the pads 40 to stay at the vertical posts 10. Moreover, the pad 40 has two downward and outward inclined lateral sides between the first and the second side to define a downward increasing width between the
25 two lateral sides. The downward increasing width of the pad 40 facilitates easy alignment of the outer

cover 50 with the pad 40.

A lower end of the engaging hole 11 on the vertical post 10 has a width slightly smaller than a thickness of the hooks 31. When the connecting member 30 is subjected to a downward force, the hooks 31 are more tightly engaged with the engaging holes 11 to give the assembled sectional rack increased structural strength and stability.

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Figs. 8 to 12 illustrates a second embodiment of the present invention having a square-sectioned vertical post 10', a connecting member 30', and an outer cover 50' different from the vertical post 10, the connecting member 30, and the outer cover 50 in the first embodiment. The connecting member 30' is provided at an end facing away from the vertical post 10' with a vertically extended guide rail 32' to replace the retaining slot 32 on the connecting member 30. The outer cover 50' has two lateral sides that are inward stamped to form two projections 51'. A front side 52' of each projection 51' facing toward the pad 40 is a downward and inward inclined surface adapted to fitly bear against the inclined surface 41 of the pad 40 and therefore apply a compressive force on the pad 40. A rear side 511' of the projection 51' opposite to the

front side 52' and an inner wall surface of the outer cover 50' together define a guide space 512' between them to engage with the guide rail 32' of the connecting member 30'. When the outer cover 50' is put over the associated pad 40 and connecting member 30', the inclined front sides 52' of the two inward projections 51' together push the pad 40 toward the vertical post 10'. When the outer cover 50' moves downward and is pushed away from the vertical post 10' by the inclined surface 41 of the pad 40, the guide rail 32' of the connecting member 30' in the guide space 512' is pulled in a direction opposite to the vertical post 10', making another end of the connecting member 30' opposite to the guide rail 32' to firmly press against an inner side of the engaging holes on the vertical post 10'.

The vertical post may be a round-sectioned pipe 10 as shown in the first embodiment of the present invention, a square-sectioned pipe 10' as shown in the second embodiment of the present invention, a triangle-sectioned pipe (not shown), an oblong-sectioned pipe (not shown), or any other differently sectioned pipe suitable for using as vertical posts of a sectional rack. The horizontal shelf 20 in the first embodiment of the present invention includes a net. However, a

shelf 20' including a wooden plate 21' as shown in Fig.
11 is also acceptable.

In brief, the present invention has the following
5 advantages and can therefore have widened
applications:

1. The vertical posts may be of differently sectioned
pipes without being limited to any specific shape.
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2. The horizontal shelves may be freely assembled to
and disassembled from the vertical posts, allowing
consumers to assemble the sectional rack according
to personal preference.